

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0288

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

USLO RIYADH

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR EG SY PLO

SUBJECT: PALESTINIANS AND THE PEACE PROCESS

REF: DAMASCUS 3326

SUMMARY. MOST EGYPTIANS WOULD REJECT SYRIAN ACCUSATIONS
CONTAINED REFTEL. IF SADAT WANTED SEPARATE PEACE, HE
COULD HAVE HAD IT, BUT HE INSISTS ON RESOLVING PALESTINIAN
ISSUE. EGYPT RECOGNIZES PLO INCAPABLE PLAYING HELPFUL
ROLE IN PEACE PROCESS AT THIS TIME, BUT HOPES FOR
MODERATES' SUPPORT IN FUTURE AND IS KEEPING ITS LINES
OPEN TO PLO MODERATES. EGYPTIANS AND OTHER ARABS HERE
BELIEVE USG NEGLECTING PALESTINIANS SINCE SADAT INITIA-
TIVE AND IS THEREBY UNDERMINING MODERATES. SINCE
PALESTINIANS WILL BE CRUCIAL FACTOR AT SOME STAGE IN
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PEACE SETTLEMENT, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT IS IN OUR INTERESTS
TO REASSURE MODERATE PALESTINIANS THAT THEIR INTERESTS
ARE NOT BEING NEGLECTED. RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT EXAMINE
WHAT WE MIGHT DO TO REASSURE THEM. SOME IDEAS THAT
OCCUR TO US ARE SPECIAL PALESTINIAN RELIEF PROJECT IN
LEBANON, IV GRANTS FOR WEST BANK MAYORS, AND RECEPTION
OF DISTINGUISHED (NON-PLO) PALESTINIANS OR AMERICANS OF

PALESTINIAN ORIGIN BY SENIOR OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON.

END SUMMARY.

1. FROM CAIRO VANTAGE POINT, SYRIAN FEARS THAT SADAT INITIATIVE HAS HARDENED ISRAEL'S POSITIONS, ELIMINATED EGYPT'S COMMITMENT TO PLO, AND STRENGTHENED PLO REJECTIONISTS (REFTEL), STEM MORE FROM SYRIA'S OBSESSIVE FEAR THAT SADAT WILL SIGN SEPARATE PEACE, THAN FROM OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF INITIATIVE. ON LATTER POINT, EGYPTIANS INSIST SADAT COULD HAVE SEPARATE PEACE AT ANY TIME WERE THIS HIS GOAL, BUT CURRENT IMPASSE STEMS PRECISELY FROM FACT THAT SADAT INSISTING ON SOLUTION TO PALESTINIAN PROBLEM.

2. EGYPT AND PLO. THERE IS, HOWEVER, LITTLE DOUBT THAT FOR VARIETY OF REASONS GOE IGNORING PLO AT THIS TIME. EGYPTIANS ARGUE THAT HOPELESSLY FACTIONALIZED PLO INCAPABLE TAKING DECISIVE ACTION ON ANY ISSUE AND THEREFORE EVEN MODERATES CANNOT BE EXPECTED BE HELPFUL AT THIS TIME. FURTHERMORE, EGYPTIANS ASK HOW ANY ARAB STATE OR ORGANIZATION COULD MAKE GESTURE OF RECONCILIATION WITH ISRAEL WHEN SADAT APPEARS HUMILIATINGLY EMPTY-HANDED BEFORE ARAB WORLD. IN SHORT, THERE IS GENERAL ACCEPTANCE THAT PALESTINIANS, LIKE JORDAN, NOT NOW IN POSITION TO ADVANCE PEACE PROCESS, NOR ARE THEY CRUCIAL TO PROCESS AT THIS STAGE.

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3. SADAT INITIATIVE. INITIATIVE DESIGNED TO WREST CONCESSIONS FROM ISRAELIS WHICH COULD AT SOME POINT BE ACCEPTED BY MODERATE PLO LEADERS. SADAT WELL AWARE OF DANGERS OF PLAYING INTO HANDS OF REJECTIONISTS BY IGNORING MODERATES, BUT ARAFAT AND OTHER MODERATES HAVE OFTEN TOLD GOE THAT THEY CANNOT PROVOKE SPLIT WITH REJECTIONISTS, UNLESS THEY OFFERED CONCRETE CONCESSIONS BY ISRAELIS. SADAT INITIATIVE AIMS AT SECURING THESE VERY CONCESSIONS, BUT IT HASN'T YET AND EGYPTIANS KNOW IT.

4. LINES BEING KEPT OPEN. EGYPTIANS ARE FREQUENTLY FRUSTRATED BY PLO INTEMPERATENESS, BUT EVEN AT THIS LOW POINT IN PEACE PROCESS, GOE WORKING QUIETLY TO EXPAND LINKS WITH PLO (CAIRO 14602). EGYPTIANS HOPING THAT PALESTINIAN MODERATES CAN HOLD ON AGAINST REJECTIONIST ONSLAUGHS DURING THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD AND THAT MODERATES WILL BE IN POSITION IN FUTURE TO COME IN TO NEGOTIATIONS. IN THIS REGARD, SOME EGYPTIAN AND ARAB LEAGUE OFFICIALS HAVE VOICED FEAR THAT USG ATTITUDE ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION SINCE SADAT INITIATIVE IS UNDERMINING MODERATES.

5. USG AND PALESTINIANS. WHERE SYRIANS MAY HAVE A POINT IS IN USG ATTITUDE TOWARD PALESTINIANS IN WAKE OF SADAT INITIATIVE. TACTICAL EGYPTIAN MOVE TO BYPASS PLO FOR TIME BEING APPEARS IN ARAB EYES TO HAVE CAUSED BLANKET OF SILENCE TO FALL OVER PALESTINIAN ISSUE IN WASHINGTON. ONE OF MOST WIDELY CIRCULATED SAYING HAS BECOME ALLEGED BRZEZINSKI "BYE BYE PLO" COMMENT TO PARIS MATCH. DESPITE REITERATION OF U.S. POSITION ON PALESTINIAN RIGHTS IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS, SOME EGYPTIANS FEAR THAT WE HAVE BACKED AWAY FROM CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S EARLIER STEPS TO GRAPPLE WITH AGONIZING QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. UNSEEMLY HASTE WITH WHICH USG SEEMINGLY DUCKED PLO ISSUE

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AFTER SADAT INITIATIVE BODES ILL, THEY SAY, FOR U.S. PRESSURE ON ISRAEL FOR EVENTUAL REALIZATION OF LEGITIMATE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. IN SHORT, EGYPTIANS WOULD AGREE WITH SYRIANS THAT USG HAS SLID BACKWARD ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION, BUT WOULD HOTLY DENY THAT EGYPT HAS DONE LIKEWISE.

6. COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION: PALESTINIANS (PROBABLY PLO) ARE AT SOME POINT ALMOST CERTAINLY GOING TO BECOME CRUCIAL FACTOR IN PEACE SETTLEMENT. PLO HAS SOME ABILITY

TO INFLUENCE COURSE OF PROCESS EVEN NOW. IT IS PROBABLY TRUE, AS SOME EGYPTIANS ARGUE, THAT A SPLIT WITHIN PLO WILL HAVE TO OCCUR BEFORE PLO PARTICIPATES IN PEACE PROCESS. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT IS IN OUR INTERESTS THAT, WHEN THIS MOMENT COMES, MODERATES ARE IN STRONGEST POSSIBLE POSITION. WITH THIS IN MIND, WE BELIEVE U.S.

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SHOULD TAKE SOME ACTIONS NOW TO CORRECT WIDESPREAD ARAB IMPRESSION THAT U.S. IS GOING ALL THE WAY WITH SADAT, BUT IN THE PROCESS WRITING OFF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. IN ORDER REASSURE MODERATE PALESTINIANS IN PALESTINE AND THE DIASPORA THAT THEIR INTERESTS ARE NOT BEING NEGLECTED, WE RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT EXAMINE THINGS WE MIGHT DO EVEN AT THIS DELICATE STAGE. SOME IDEAS THAT OCCUR TO US ARE SOME SPECIAL EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AFFECTED BY RECENT FIGHTING IN LEBANON, IV GRANTS FOR ONE OR MORE WEST BANK MAYORS OR RECEPTION BY SENIOR U.S. OFFICIAL OF ONE OR MORE DISTINGUISHED (NON-PLO) PALESTINIANS OR AMERICANS OF PALESTINIAN ORIGIN. EILTS

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